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THE MIGRATION CRISIS AS A THREAT IN THE THIRD DECADE OF THE 21ST CENTURY IN POLAND

Abstract

The increasing influx of migration, has triggered discussions on state security. The increasing number of migration processes is currently a significant challenge for the government, and optimising migration policies and stemming irregular migrant flows have become priorities for European countries. Nowadays, international migrations are an important part of the shaping of the world order, as well as an important factor influencing countries' policies – both domestic and foreign. They are recognised as the foundation that will shape the new social reality in the world.

Key words

Eurostat, migration routes, disinformation activities, migration discourse

Introduction

Although the number of migrants and refugees arriving in Europe was already on the rise, the beginning of the migration crisis in Europe is considered to be 2015, when, according to Eurostat, European Union member states received more than 1.2 million asylum applications, a number more than double that of the previous year. As many as $\frac{2}{3}$ of the asylum applications in the entire European Union were received by only four countries – Germany, Hungary, Sweden and Austria. From January to June 2017, 71.9 per cent of all refugees arriving in Europe across the Mediterranean were men, 11.2 per cent were women and 16.9 per cent were children. The ongoing crisis in Europe since the beginning of the 21st century caused by the mass arrival of migrants and refugees is the largest phenomenon of its kind since the Second World War.

In 1990, in Dublin, the member states of the European Communities signed a convention designating the state responsible for processing asylum applications lodged in one of the member states. This convention stipulated that a refugee's application for political asylum would be processed by the European Union country to which the refugee first arrived¹. In practice, this meant that refugees arriving in Europe via the Mediterranean should remain in Italy or Greece and seek asylum there.

In 2015, Alexis Tsipras, then Prime Minister of Greece, appealed to the rest of the European Union to show

solidarity in accepting refugees. The office of the UN commissioner for refugees issued a statement that said. Greece is facing a humanitarian crisis due to the huge influx of refugees.

In response, the then German Chancellor Angela Merkel declared that “those who need help must be granted asylum in Europe”. Thousands of refugees set off along the Balkan route via Hungary, heading for Austria and Germany. In contrast, refugees from Italy made their way to France and then to the UK². As a consequence of these events, the European Commission issued two decisions to relocate 160,000 refugees from Italy, Greece and Hungary to the rest of the European Union.

In July 2015, the Hungarian government decided to build a fence along the entire length of the border with Serbia, through which the Balkan route runs. The end of 2015 sees the start of negotiations between the European Union and Turkey to resolve the migration crisis. On 18 March 2016, an agreement is signed that brings a significant halt to the migration of refugees to Europe via the Eastern Mediterranean and Balkan routes. 2019 sees a decrease in refugee arrivals to Europe.

Methodological and Methodical Assumptions

In order to understand the impact of the migration crisis on Poland in the third decade of the 21st century, a multifaceted research approach was used, including both

¹ Convention designating the State responsible for examining applications for asylum lodged in one of the Member States of the European Communities, done at Dublin on 15 June 1990.OJ. 2005 No. 24, item 194.

² *Angela Merkel: those who need help must be given asylum in Europe* <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/aug/30/angela-merkel-great-migrant-gamble-paid-off> [access: 20.04.2024].

quantitative and qualitative methods. The key research steps and techniques used in this study are outlined below:

1. Literature review:

- existing studies, reports, academic articles and government publications on migration and its socio-economic and political consequences in Poland and internationally were analysed,
- the main migration theories and models and their application in the Polish context are identified.

2. Case studies:

- a case study method was used to analyse specific situations and events related to migration in Poland, such as the 2021 crisis on the border with Belarus,
- there has been a detailed analysis of the government's response, the actions of the border services and the public reaction to these events.

3. Public policy analysis:

- Poland's current migration policies, their development in recent years and their effectiveness in managing the influx of migrants were examined,
- the Polish approach to migration was compared with the policies of other EU countries to identify best practices and areas for improvement.

The methodology adopted made it possible to assess the migration crisis in Poland, taking into account its multidimensional nature. Quantitative analysis provided hard data on the scale of the phenomenon, while qualitative methods

enabled an understanding of its social and political implications. The combination of these approaches provides a solid basis for policy recommendations and further research in this area.

Migration crisis

Among the main reasons for the emigration of the world's population, we can include economic, educational, business, security, climate-environmental, tourism, medical and religious reasons³. The main directions of migration are Central Europe, to which people from Eastern Europe and Asia migrate, and Western Europe, in turn, is the direction of migration for people from Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa.

The cause of the current migration crisis in Europe was the Arab Spring, which began in 2010. There were numerous protests against the authorities in many Arab countries, it led to civil war in Syria and Libya and to clashes in Libia Lebanon. The civil war in Syria, which has been ongoing since 2011, has led to the deaths of several hundred thousand people. In the aftermath, some 13 million Syrians have been forced to flee their homes, including almost 5 million who have gone abroad⁴. The rise of the radical Islamic State has also been the cause of mass migration from Arab countries, mainly religious minorities such as Christians and Yazidis, whose followers migrate for fear of persecution.

The situation is similar for the people of Eritrea, who are fleeing for fear of

3 See: A. Tavares, W. Kolano, *The phenomenon of migration in the context of threats to the internal security of Portugal and Poland*, "Security Forum" 2022, No. 2

4 *Syrian refugees: the crisis in numbers* <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2015/09/syrias-refugee-crisis-in-numbers/> [access: 12.04.2024].

ongoing human rights violations and an indefinite military service obligation. Around 5 000 people flee Eritrea every month.

The causes of the migration crisis also include the unstable political and economic situation in many countries in Africa, the Middle East and Europe.⁵ Among the migrants, we can find not only Syrians or Eritreans, but also Belarusians, Albanians, Serbs, Pakistanis, people from Kosovo, Iraq, Afghanistan or the Philippines.

Among the main routes of refugees and migrants we can include:

- West African route – from Morocco to the Canary Islands,
- Western Mediterranean route – from Morocco to Spain (mainly via the Mediterranean),
- Central Mediterranean route – from Algeria, Tunisia or Libya to Italy (via the Mediterranean),
- Eastern Mediterranean route:
 - by sea across the Mediterranean from Turkey to Greece, Italy or Cyprus,
 - by land from Turkey to Greece or Bulgaria,
- Balkan route – from Serbia to Hungary or from Serbia to Croatia, then Slovenia,
- Eastern European route – from Ukraine to Poland,
- Arctic route – from Russia to Finland or Norway.⁶

Foreign nationals from Africa and the Middle East and other non-European countries are in most cases required to bring with them a visa for legal entry

into the European Union. Obtaining a visa involves a number of formalities, and efforts to obtain a visa are not always successful. The mere possession of a visa does not guarantee entry into a country. In addition, the border guards make the final decision on entry. For this reason, many people choose to cross borders illegally.

Most of the routes pass through the Mediterranean Sea and the number of deaths among refugees entering Europe is high. This is largely due to the poor state of repair or the sinking of boats in order to extort assistance from coastguards and navies. Despite the numerous measures taken, according to the International Organisation for Migration, the mortality rate among refugees trying to cross the Mediterranean continues to increase.

The emergence of migration routes is influenced by many social, economic and political factors. For migrants from Africa or Asia, the dream is to get to Europe, given that many countries are signatories to the Geneva Convention, and this document obliges them to provide shelter to people who, fleeing war or persecution, seek refugee status.

Migration crisis on Belarus' border with the EU

Alyaksandr Lukashenka has served as president of Belarus since 1994. The Belarusian regime was accused of massive electoral fraud during the 2020 presidential election by the

5 B. Pasamonik, U. Markowska-Manista, *Kryzys migracyjny Perspektywa społeczno-kulturowa*, Warszawa 2017.

6 K. Borońska-Hryniewiecka, *Niekontrolowane migracje do Unii Europejskiej – implikacje dla Polski*, P. Sasnal (ed.), Warszawa 2015.

international community and the Belarusian opposition. Despite the election victory, the United States, the European Union, the United Kingdom and their allies, did not recognise Lukashenko as president. The announced election results also sparked mass protests in Belarus. After the presidential election, opposition leader Svitlana Tikhanouska fled to Lithuania.

In 2021, Alyaksandr Lukashenka threatened not to stop drug traffickers, human traffickers and armed migrants arriving in the European Union. The crisis began when the Belarusian authorities set up channels to smuggle migrants out of the country across the EU border into Lithuania, Poland and Latvia. President Alyaksandr Lukashenka has admitted that supporting the illegal cross-border smuggling of migrants is a response to EU sanctions against Belarus. As a result of the crisis, the Polish and Latvian governments have decided to impose states of emergency in the border areas with Belarus, while the Lithuanian government has imposed a state of emergency throughout the country.

Some sources link this to the Zapad 2021 manoeuvres, in which such illegal migration and related information warfare are asymmetric, unconventional, below the threshold of war, designed to test the reconnaissance, timing and response of Poland and Lithuania.

Migration policy and new threats

Having already outlined the situation related to the migration crisis, we can move on to analyse the potential threats to our country from the migration policy pursued both in the European Union and in Poland.

The intensive influx of migrants into the European Union and Poland can in many cases increase existing threats and be a source of new ones. One status of them is the potential increase in terrorism⁷. The spectacular terrorist attacks carried out by the Islamic State in cities such as Paris, Nice, Brussels, Manchester, London, Barcelona and Berlin have made the migration crisis widely associated mainly with the risk of further attacks.

However, the statistics clearly show that the highest number of victims of terrorist attacks in Europe were recorded in the 1970s and 1980s. So why such a high ranking?

A key element is the 'accessibility' of terrorist attacks through modern means of communication, such as social media. Nowadays, any person with a phone and an active internet connection can become a kind of journalist covering an event. As a result, any terrorist attack gains great importance from this point of view⁸. The almost universal dependence on social media, however, gives space for analyses devoid of rationality, the impact of which seems to be stronger than the opinions of experts.

7 See: R. Socha, *Security and threats- mutual relations*, [in:] *Selected aspects of security research* B. Kaczmarczyk, A. Wawrzusiszyn (eds.), Elk 2014; B. Wiśniewski, *Description of Security Systems – a Few Reflections*, "Internal Security" 2019, No 1, pp. 9-20; B. Wisniewski, *National Security Governance System- a Few Remarks and Reservations*, "Security Forum" 2022, No 1, pp. 51-60.

8 M. Chruściel, T. Gajewski, T. Górka-Winter, *Poland in the European migration crisis*, Warszawa 2019.

The migration crisis has created a favourable environment for disinformation activities. The strong emotions and tensions surrounding the migration issue, as well as the availability of social media, have created a wide area susceptible to manipulation. Both supporters and opponents of the 'migration discourse' are vulnerable to manipulation. In addition, third parties with a vested interest in exacerbating the crisis are also manipulating the situation.

Dependence on technology and a progressive lack of trust, declining levels of social capital and pervasive risks all make the migration crisis a tool for powerful and targeted disinformation. Its potential is difficult to assess.

A real threat related to the migration crisis and its consequences is also an increase in the level of crime⁹. Although it may be difficult to analyse the structure of this problem in individual EU member states, it can be assumed that the migration crisis has influenced and will continue to influence certain modifications in the functioning of criminal environments in Europe and Poland.

The situation in Poland from the perspective of the coming years

Based on various estimates, based on current data and trends, it is indicated that up to more than 5 million people may arrive in Poland by 2060. Polish society is still perceived, often stereotypically, as hostile to foreigners, and Polish

legal regulations, despite some updates, are still a significant barrier to accessing the labour market and education. Despite these difficulties, Poland needs to be ready for an increasing number of immigrants, both from neighbouring countries and from other regions of the world. Continued pressure from the European Union to relocate migrants from the Middle East and North Africa region is also likely¹⁰. Even the largest countries, such as Germany, are beginning to find it difficult to handle illegal immigration, with increasing obligations to the welfare system.

An influx of migrants from sub-Saharan Africa can be expected in the coming years. Although they may not be interested in settling in Poland, there is a possibility that pressure from other EU countries will force Poland to accept some of them. Unfortunately, there is no guarantee that these migrants will be able to actively integrate into the Polish labour market, as they will mostly be young people without professional qualifications and knowledge of the Polish language. It is also likely that they will be burdened with cultural patterns, which will make their integration difficult or impossible.

It can be assumed that the pressure from the EU institutions and the EU Member States most affected by increased migration after 2015 for Poland to become more actively involved in solving this problematic phenomenon will increase.

⁹ More: B. Mróz, *The impact of migration threats on the internal security of the state*, *Journal of Modern Science*, Józefów 2017.

¹⁰ See: A. Tavares, W. Kolano, *The phenomenon of migration in the context of threats to the internal security of Portugal and Poland*, "Security Forum" 2022, No 2; A. Tavares, W. Kolano, *The role of Poland in ensuring European Security*, "Security Forum" 2022, No 1.

The main threats to internal security have two sources. On the one hand, they stem from criminal activities undertaken by the foreigner himself and, on the other hand, they are related to the activities of organised criminal groups that have turned illegal migration into a profitable source of income¹¹.

Other threats to the host country of migrants are also related to the cultural sphere and refer to the destabilisation of social structures. These problems affect both legal and irregular migrants.

Environments that deliberately separate themselves from the local population, unwilling to assimilate and learning the language, create their own cultural, social, political organisations, without being willing to accept the legal system and cultural differences of the host country. Immigrant communities can provide a base for various extremist movements. Growing feelings of frustration and disillusionment with the economic and legal situation, integration problems and the marginalisation or even social exclusion of immigrants have the potential to generate violent reactions. These reactions, in turn, can easily spill over from country to country. On the other hand, the increasing confirmation of the spread of extremist ideologies among indigenous, especially young, individuals is particularly dangerous. These, in search of higher values, life goals and ideals, sometimes feel their absence in Western civilisation and find them in Muslim communities.

The reception of significant numbers of migrants requires the provision of a

minimum of social support. However, not all experts agree with seeing this aspect of migration as a burden. Some see migrants as an opportunity for economic recovery and for solving demographic problems.

The most important issues relate not only to internal security, but also to migrants' access to the labour market, education, health care, etc., influencing the transformation of the social structure of the receiving countries, also triggering institutional and systemic changes. In the European Union, therefore, the cooperation of all Member States is required to manage migration effectively. In Poland, the proposed and adopted solutions must not deviate from past experience, public sentiment and available opportunities.

Summary

Movement is a common phenomenon and an expression of human activity. Its complexity leads to both positive and negative consequences, especially in the context of security. Migration, i.e. both the permanent and temporary leaving of a permanent place of residence by individuals or groups of people to move to another place, entails a number of events that can certainly be considered security threats. The aim of this article is to analyse the impact of migration on state security. Indeed, Poland's migration policy to date has lacked coherence and has instead been based on ad hoc responses to a variety of challenges that have not formed a strategically sound

11 A. Tavares, W. Kolano, *The impact of political and structural changes with migratory flows on the resilience of the Schengen system – challenges for European integration*, "Security Forum" 2023, No 2.

whole. Therefore, it is necessary to develop the substantive foundations of an optimal migration strategy to meet current needs and minimise the risk of the above-discussed threats emanating from the global migration crisis.

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